



The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

I quote part of a statement on the international situation that has been issued by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America representing nearly all the larger Protestant denominations in the United States. The draft was prepared in the first instance by Mr. John Foster Dulles, one of the leading Christian laymen in the United States with a wide experience of international affairs. A representative statement of this kind is a valuable aid in understanding the American Christian outlook at the present time.

AMERICAN CHURCHES AND THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

"In time of war the Churches face their most difficult task. It is then that human and demonic forces operate most violently to divide mankind and to impair that spirit of universal brotherhood and of charity which is of the essence of Christianity. To maintain spiritual unity in the face of such disruptive forces becomes a paramount task of the churches.

"If evil is to-day rampant, this has a cause. It is certain that none of us is guiltless, and we who are Americans recognize that a great burden must rest upon us. During the period preceding, and formative of, the present wars, our nation possessed great power and influence. Through our action or non-action we exerted a profound influence upon the course of world events. That course has generated widespread unrest, great violence and immense disaster. Obviously, we have fallen far short of that which was required.

"It is no excuse to say that we were blind, or that we ourselves preferred peace. Our blindness was not an affliction from without, but a result of our smug complacency and narrow selfishness. And to profess a love for peace is no great virtue in those who control so disproportionate a share of the world's wealth that to retain it is their principal concern. 'Peace,' which means merely an undisturbed exploitation of power and privilege, is not true peace, but only an interlude which inevitably provokes revolt. To seek, through power, to maintain a *status quo* of inequality and injustice may be no less evil than to invoke force to change it.

"The fact that we share responsibility for the present world situation does not, however, require us to condone its evil manifestations. We must oppose the wreaking of vengeance upon the innocent and the subjection to cruel and inhuman treatment of those who are weak. We must proclaim and seek application of the truth that all men are equal in the eyes of God and should not be discriminated against by man on the ground of race, religion or class. We must reject any system which would deny to men liberty of conscience and the enjoyment of natural rights or which would inculcate the doctrines of atheism.

"It is in time of war, and alarms of war, that hatreds, hypocrisies and false deifications become most intense. The present is thus a time when to prevent such evils becomes a primary task of the Churches.

1. Let us abstain from all hatred of our fellowmen. Evil, to be sure, we must seek to resist and to overcome. But this need not involve hatred of any human being.

2. As the Churches must set themselves against hatred, so, too, must they set themselves against hypocrisy. When men's minds and emotions are concentrated upon evil elsewhere, it is almost inevitable that they should, by comparison, feel themselves to be righteous. This leads quickly to hypocrisy which, more than any other sin, evoked the indignant condemnation of Christ.

3. It is peculiarly necessary, in time of war, that the Churches constantly reaffirm the distinction between God and State. Christians will often feel, and at times they may rightly feel, that the cause of their nation represents the greater good or the lesser evil. They may find, in their form of society, values which transcend the selfish conceptions of sovereignty and power. They may feel that it is their duty, as Christians, to support what seems to them the greater good. But the spiritual and social gains to be expected from any national victory are never so decisive or so permanent as to justify as an act of expediency, identifying the cause of Christ with the cause of nation. To do this would forfeit that independence of the world which is indispensable if the Churches are to exert a continuing spiritual influence upon the world. Therefore, Christians must never fail to remember that all human projects are finite and prone to error, and that man's chief end is not to enhance the power, or even to secure the safety, of any nation. Let us not give unto Caesar a spiritual allegiance which belongs only to God."

SIR ROBERT VANSITTART AND GERMANY

There is not room to comment at length on Sir Robert Vansittart's recent broadcast talks on Germany.¹ Some of the necessary things have been said by Stephen King-Hall in the *K.H. News-Letter*.² I do not quarrel with Sir Robert Vansittart for putting forward the thesis that there are important facts relating to the German character and German history of which full account must be taken in the making of peace. Those who would build securely for the future must be ready to face unflinchingly unpalatable facts. But I believe the presuppositions of these talks to be in important respects false, the picture distorted, and their publication at the present time contrary to the national interest, because of the unfortunate effect they are bound to have on neutral opinion and on the body of opinion in Germany itself which might in the future be rallied to our side.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

¹ *Black Record*, Hamish Hamilton, 6d.

² No. 238, Jan. 30th, 1941 (3d. post free). Hartfield House, Headley, Bordon, Hants.

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WAR AND PEACE AIMS AND THE CHURCH'S TASK

The Minister for Economic Warfare stated in public some time ago that an announcement of national "war aims" on the part of the Government might be expected shortly, either by a communication to the Press or in a speech by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister later indicated that in his judgment the time was not yet at hand when such a declaration could be made with advantage. It is not difficult to deduce how matters stand. We may assume that a great deal of work has been done in official, as in unofficial, circles upon the subject. We cannot complain that a right opportunity should be sought for a pronouncement which must needs be momentous. In any case an official statement, whenever made and however admirable, does not relieve private citizens from the duty of forming their own judgment.

A Government statement is necessarily conservative, because it is made by those who have to translate their proposals into act. It may well be supplemented by the contribution of those who, not bearing so great responsibilities, are free to scout ahead, as it were, testing and criticising ideas and informing the public mind. In this task Christians have an obvious duty to share. The Church—or the Churches—are limited in their official capacity to the enunciation of moral principles which command the assent of all Christians; but in the wide field of discussion where difference of Christian judgment is easily possible, the Christian individual or group not only may, but must, try to bring to bear upon the complex practical problems by which we are faced the insights of Christian faith. The effect of these insights may be in the main negative rather than positive, but none the less important.

To the reasons which have been advanced in favour of some official pronouncement I would add two others, which I have scarcely seen mentioned. The first is the blockade

and its effect upon Continental countries; the second is the importance of the American attitude.

It is our hope that the blockaded peoples, lately allies and still, we trust, friends, will realize that their freedom depends upon the defeat of Nazism and that what is necessary to that defeat must be endured. But we should be foolish not to recognize that there are powerful forces working the other way. Blockade is a terrible weapon and its effects in the long run are terrible. Public discussion in these countries is subject to Nazi control, and Nazi propaganda will be addressed to minds rendered more susceptible to it by the blockade. Britain is not so popular on the Continent that it will be sufficient to show that the sufferings entailed by a blockade are necessary for a British victory or British interests; it must be clear that what these peoples have to suffer is for the sake of their own freedom. Those who have had to submit for months to Nazi rule may become subtly habituated to it and reconciled to its apparent inevitability. This may show itself in a mood of resignation to the much advertised "new order" in Europe. It is widely recognized that a mere return to national sovereignties will not solve Europe's problems, and it is not hard to understand that the less courageous and clear-sighted may incline to accept the only kind of European order which circumstances appear to make possible.

There are strong reasons for indicating, at least in broad outline, what is the nature of the European (or even of the world) order that we should wish to see set up, and to which we should wish to contribute by effort and if necessary by sacrifice. It is not, of course, a question of imposing an order on unwilling peoples. What others will welcome is that we should make clear where our sympathies lie, what sort of plans commend themselves to us in the light of the lessons of the war, and where our weight is to be thrown.

The other factor to be borne in mind is the United States. It is of the highest importance, as I tried to argue in an earlier Supplement, that thoughtful minds in America should be convinced that there are objectives of supreme moment to the well-being of the world, which can only be attained by the common action of the United States and ourselves. I am not thinking here of belligerent action, on which it is inexpedient for British persons to offer an opinion. The United States are now deeply moved to aid us in our defence; but it would be blind optimism to suppose that they are equally sympathetic to all aspects of British policy. There is in the United States, along with its generous sympathies, a strong strain of suspicion of British policies. As soon as they pass beyond the stage of aiding us in our defence to contemplate sharing with us in the establishment of some order in Europe and beyond, they will begin to ask questions. The old questions—India, British imperialism, British hegemony—will raise their heads. It would be unwise to forget that this will certainly happen.

Outside the British Commonwealth there is no nation which cherishes what may be called liberal ideas, and at the same time possesses power, except the United States. A clear statement which held the assent of responsible people in both countries might be of far-reaching significance. If a union of aim and objective between ourselves and the United States cannot be brought about, there is little prospect of improving the international situation.

PRINCIPLE

In regard to these questions Christians have to act in two distinct spheres. There are practical measures to be taken in the political and economic realm; and there are the distinctive duties which belong to the Church as such. In the first group, again, it is necessary to distinguish between the permanent arrangements which will ultimately form the basis of a better world order and the immediate needs which will have to be faced upon the cessation of war.

The broad principles on which a Christian judgment on questions of practical policy should be based, as has been shown by representative groups and gatherings in recent years, meet with wide acceptance. At a small but influential gathering held at Geneva just before the war broke out, and attended by German, Dutch, Swiss, French,

Scandinavian, Russian, Hungarian and Oriental delegates as well as by British and American, there was complete agreement to a statement which would not have passed unchallenged at the Oxford Conference of 1937. This statement, of which the sponsor was Professor Emil Brunner, was to the effect that "the Gospel contains directions for life and for the mutual relations that should exist between states and nations, which every Christian ought to know and obey." Among these "basic principles" were included :

- the equal dignity of all men,
- respect for human life,
- acknowledgment of the solidarity for good and evil of all nations and races of the earth,
- respect for the plighted word,
- the recognition that power of any kind, political or economic, must be co-extensive with responsibility.

To those who are familiar with the struggles of Continental theologians on this subject it will not seem unimportant that on the eve of war Lutherans and Reformed were in agreement that *there are rules for states which are deducible from the Gospel*.

There was recently published in *The Times* a letter signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Cardinal Hinsley and the Moderator of the Federal Free Church Council in which were recorded, as matters on which the four signatories were unanimous, the five points promulgated a year ago by the Pope and five other points arrived at by the Oxford Conference of 1937. The first five may be very briefly summarised as follows :

- the right of every nation to life and independence,
- general and agreed reduction of armament,
- an international body to maintain and, if necessary, revise the international order,
- protection of the rights of minorities,
- the submission of human statutes to the sacred and inviolable standards of the laws of God.

To these Papal points the British leaders added five "standards by which economic situations and proposals may be tested," these being domestic rather than international in their bearing :

- the abolition of extreme inequalities in wealth,
- equal opportunities for education and advancement for every child,

safeguarding of the family as a social unit, restoration of the sense of divine vocation in men's daily work, fair distribution of the riches of the earth to all.

These statements, carefully examined, register a surprising amount of agreement on certain points which are of great importance—(a) the solidarity of mankind and the need to frame political institutions which reflect this; (b) the emptiness of mere political formularies if divorced from social and economic considerations; (c) a tendency to think more of basic human rights than of systems such as "democracy."

By such standards a mere return to the *status quo ante bellum* is condemned. The problem is seen to be one of advancing the reign of law, of combining the extension of social and international controls with the growth of liberty. It is becoming more and more apparent that this is at bottom a moral and religious question. Emphasis on individual rights has to be tempered by dedication; the power of the mass organization, political or economic, will inevitably become a tyranny unless it is itself subordinate—and to what else but God?

ACTION

When we consider what is needed in the realm of action, if such principles as these are to be obeyed, we face, first, the necessity for such a definite victory over the Axis powers, and in particular over Germany, as shall ensure the possibility of their being considered. I imagine that those who oppose the further elaboration of our national aims do so because they feel that certain objectives are both so clear in their necessity and so considerable in their magnitude that it is needless now to go further. Among such necessary objectives are the evacuation of the conquered and occupied territories, the ending of the rule of Hitler and the Nazi leaders (one should add also that of Mussolini and his Fascists, save that they, prior in time, are now a derivative problem), the ending of all that tyranny which is represented by the Gestapo and the Nuremberg decrees.

But it has already been argued that to say this leaves unanswered questions that are not distant but immediate. What kind of order in Europe and the world do we want to arise, and if the principles set forth above are to be our guide, how can the transition be made from one order of things to another?

It is in this problem of transition that the ordinary thoughtful man finds his main difficulties. A full-dress plan for federalism leaves many people unconvinced, because they cannot see how the move is to be made from one position to another entirely different, and they feel that abstract principles cannot thus be applied *simpliciter* to a very complicated situation, in which all sorts of national idiosyncrasies are involved. There is beginning to emerge, however, a line of thought which seems to be gaining increasing support among those most competent to form a judgment.

The underlying principle is to concentrate attention in the first instance upon the measures which are necessary in the immediate post-war period. Measures will obviously be needed for policing, for feeding, for the rationing of raw materials and for many tasks of reconstruction. The provisions for dealing with the immediate emergency can be planned in such a way that they will become the nucleus of a permanent organization of government. The transportation of food to hungry peoples, the mobilising of medical services on an international scale, the re-making of the links between Europe and the producing countries so that the vast surpluses of raw material are placed at the service of a reconstructed European industry—these are only some of the tasks which will have to be faced and for which preparation must be made *now*. For their carrying out Anglo-American co-operation is an absolute prerequisite. They are, moreover, so central and vital that the measures taken to deal with them might, if well-devised, lay the foundation of a permanent order.

Economic provision is going to be more important and urgent than the devising of new political forms. Moreover, the necessities of economic life cut across the national boundaries of Europe and the rebuilding of Europe's life requires that economic realities (e.g. the natural provision and juxtaposition of raw materials and industries) should be followed irrespective of national frontiers.

I suggest that the key to the future may lie in the combination of this economic and social work of reconstruction with the promulgation of a basal charter of human rights. Obviously the task of reconstruction can be carried out only under the authority of those powers which dispose of unquestioned force, and it is here assumed that at the end of the war there would be such a preponderance of power in the hands of the

British Commonwealth and the United States. Since the granting of economic assistance in the tasks of reconstruction provides a "sanction" as powerful as force, it would be possible to make full economic co-operation on an equal basis dependent upon acceptance of a fundamental charter of human rights. It is possible to gain a wider assent to such a charter than to forms of government such as "democracy."

The charter might include such rights and liberties as the following:

The restoration of civil and religious liberties; freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of research; freedom of association; freedom of religious worship; fair and open trial, equality before the law, and abolition of secret agencies of oppression.

These phrases may be too redolent of the life and ideas of the western democracies, and it may be necessary to translate them into terms that relate them more closely to the life of other peoples, such as the German. But the essential point is that since the control of a major part of the economic resources of the world is in fact vested in the British Commonwealth and the United States, these two powers should invite into full and equal co-operation with them those nations which accept the same basal human rights, and that the linking of the two things, access to raw materials and acceptance of human rights, should dominate the relations of this group with other peoples.

It would be necessary that all those nations who thus band themselves together should consult one another and know exactly where they stand on the matter of common defence. The experience of the British Commonwealth shows that, provided there is a certain basal community of ideals and understanding of life, the concerting of defence measures is more important than formal political federation, which the Dominions have hitherto eschewed. The extent to which the problem will be merely one of policing, and the degree of disarmament possible, depend mainly if not entirely upon the kind of Germany with which ultimately peace is made—a collapsed Germany or one able to negotiate.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

There will, of course, be a multitude of special problems that will require consideration. For example, the question of colonies.

Here the primary consideration is not the satisfaction of the claims of European nations but the interests, welfare and development of the native populations. Again, there is the question of the Jews, which is not the concern of Jews alone, and which if left unsolved will leave a permanent source of instability in any international system. Another important question is that of religious and missionary freedom.

THE CHURCH'S TASK

In all such planning, so far as it can be affected by public discussion, it is plainly necessary that Christian men and women should make their contribution. But there are distinctive tasks which must be performed by the Church itself.

This subject needs a Supplement to itself, and it is better only to indicate one main conviction within this sphere. Whether we are looking to the immediate future or further into the years ahead, the Church's greatest task is, under God, that of creating new life. There is likely to be in Europe a degree of chaos and bewilderment, of hate, revenge and despair such as may well appal us, if the war should last through the period of which leaders speak. Whence is to come that re-creating spirit of hope and life which mankind will so sorely need? The central, vital matter is that the Church should prove itself to be the Church, embracing in its unity all who believe in Christ—an oecumenical society transcending all differences of race and nationality. A fellowship of Christians across the national barriers could be a fountain of hope and life in the midst of chaos. This is no mere dream, for the bonds that have united Christians in the oecumenical movement have not been broken, and relations that have had to lapse through want of communications can be resumed. We know something of the spirit that has been shown in the dark days by Churches in Scandinavia, Holland and France. It may turn out that just as the East Enders of bombed London found a quality in their parsons that they had not recognized before, so the power to which the Churches have access may shine more brightly in them through the adversity in which the nations are held. In that case the friendships and trust which the oecumenical movement enshrines may prove to be the God-given condition of action.

WILLIAM PATON.